

## How Can I Protect My Child or Teen Against Hepatitis B?

You can protect your child with hepatitis B vaccine. Hepatitis B vaccine has been shown to be a very safe vaccine. Your child will get three shots of hepatitis B vaccine over a period of about six months. It can be given at the same time as other recommended childhood vaccines.

Washington State law requires the three-shot series of hepatitis B vaccine for children in preschool or childcare and children entering kindergarten. Exemptions are available in Washington State for medical, religious or personal reasons.

The Washington State Department of Health recommends the three-shot series of hepatitis B vaccine for infants, 11 and 12 year olds, teenagers who have a high risk of exposure, and any teenager whose doctor recommends it.

## Where Can I Take My Child for Hepatitis B Vaccination?

Your doctor's office, a community health care facility, or a city or county public health department can immunize your child against hepatitis B or provide information on a location. It's best to call ahead of time to make sure vaccine is available. For more information about immunizations and where to get them, call

**1-800-322-2588**

*healthy mothers, healthy babies hotline*



For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats. Please call 1-800-525-0127 or TDD Relay 1-800-833-6388

## What Parents Need to Know about Hepatitis B



# Hepatitis

## Why Hepatitis B?

An estimated 200,000 people are infected with hepatitis B each year in the U.S. At least half of them have no symptoms and may not know they have it. Yet they are able to spread it to others. This means that *everyone* is at risk of getting hepatitis B—infants, children, teenagers and adults.

As of September 1997, hepatitis B vaccine is required by state law for children in preschool and childcare and children entering kindergarten. Exemptions are available for medical, religious or personal reasons in Washington State. Because hepatitis B vaccine is given as a series of three shots over a period of about six months, plan ahead to make sure your child is immunized before starting school, preschool or childcare. Call for a doctor's appointment today.

## What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a serious disease caused by a virus that attacks the liver. It can cause severe illness and death. The virus can remain in the body for a lifetime and cause ongoing liver damage and even cancer.

The younger a person is when they get hepatitis B, the greater the likelihood that they will become a carrier and suffer from chronic liver disease or liver cancer later in life. Infants born to mothers with hepatitis B have up to a 90% chance of becoming infected. Ninety percent of the infants infected at birth become hepatitis B carriers. Up to 25% of these carriers will die of liver disease as adults.

## How is Hepatitis B Spread?

Hepatitis B is spread from person to person by direct contact with infected blood or body fluids. Even small amounts of infected blood can cause infection.

Hepatitis B can be spread by:

- an infected mother to her baby during childbirth
- sharing toothbrushes, needles or razors that belong to an infected person
- using body piercing or tattooing equipment that has not been sterilized
- having sex with a person who has hepatitis B
- occupational exposures (e.g. lab worker, law enforcement, EMT, etc.)

You do not get hepatitis B if you hold hands with an infected person or if an infected person sneezes or coughs near you.

# Hepatitis





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